



**U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Texas**

**Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Shana Jones, Special Assistant  
Daryl Fields, Public Affairs Officer  
610 N.W. Loop 410  
San Antonio, Texas 78216  
(210) 384-7440

**LEADER OF INTERNATIONAL COCAINE SMUGGLING OPERATION  
SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON**

(Waco, Texas) **United States Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced today that, **DAVID SALAZAR**, 44, of Dallas, Texas, was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison and fined \$1,000 for conspiracy to launder money and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine.

During his guilty plea hearing on February 20, 2003, Salazar admitted that, beginning as early as January 1, 1996, he was the leader of an organized crime and cocaine smuggling operation in the United States and Mexico. In order to facilitate this ongoing illegal enterprise, Salazar would front the cocaine to his distributors who would eventually sell the cocaine and return the drug money collected back to Salazar who would then transport the illegally gotten currency to his suppliers in Mexico.

The cocaine was often shipped via the United States Postal Service to Manuel Ledezma<sup>1</sup>, or to the residence of Salazar's ex-wife and children, Armandina Pena Salazar<sup>2</sup>, Monica Salazar<sup>3</sup> and Steve Salazar<sup>4</sup>, located in Dallas, Texas. During the course of this conspiracy, Salazar would distribute cocaine to his son, Steve Salazar, and Micheal Bowens<sup>5</sup> among others who would then further distribute the cocaine. Manuel Ledezma and Elizabeth Ledezma<sup>6</sup> collected and store money derived from the sale of the cocaine.

"Only a cooperative effort between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies can effectively fight this type of drug trafficking that is so pervasive along our border with Mexico," stated **U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton**. "I applaud the dedication and perseverance of law enforcement in investigating this case and bringing these drug smugglers to justice."

The U.S. government has seized the real and personal property of Salazar and his family that was either used in the drug smuggling operation or facilitated its operation. The government-seized property includes cash, two residences located in Dallas, Texas, and three vehicles.

"IRS special agents used their expertise in conducting financial investigations to unravel the money picture in this case and identified assets purchased by the Salazar organization from the sale and distribution of cocaine," stated **Enrique Fasci, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation**. "So far, approximately \$1.1 million has been forfeited to the government in connection with this investigation."